

# Protect Your Groundwater to Protect Your Health

DOVER – Nearly every person in Delaware drinks some form of groundwater on a daily basis, so we all have a reason to preserve its quality. That's why the Delaware Office of Drinking Water (ODW) within the Division of Public Health (DPH) is recognizing national Protect Your Groundwater Day on September 8, 2015.

Many public water systems draw all or part of their supply from groundwater, so protecting the resource protects the public water supply and impacts treatment costs according to the National Groundwater Association. Additionally, if you own a well to provide water for your family, farm, or business, groundwater protection is doubly important. As a well owner, you are the manager of your own water system. Protecting groundwater will help reduce risks to your water supply.

Americans are the largest water users, per capita, in the world. By helping to protect our groundwater, you can ensure we all have clean drinking water now and into the future.

Contamination caused by human activities

Human activities can pollute groundwater, and this is where every person can help protect groundwater – both in terms of groundwater quality and quantity. Some common human causes of groundwater contamination are:

- Improper storage or disposal of hazardous substances
- Improper use of fertilizers, animal manures, herbicides, insecticides, and pesticides
- Chemical spills
- Improperly built and/or maintained septic systems
- Improperly abandoned wells (these include water wells, groundwater monitoring wells, and wells used in cleaning contaminated groundwater)

An emerging concern in recent years is the occurrence of pharmaceuticals and personal care products in water. Much research remains to be done to assess the health risks of trace amounts of these items. Proper disposal of medications is strongly encouraged. Find out where Delaware's eight permanent drug disposal sites are located by [clicking here](#). Delaware will also be holding a Drug Take Back Day on September 12, 2015 at multiple locations to be announced soon.

#### Steps to prevent groundwater contamination

When it comes to hazardous household substances:

- o Store them properly in a secure place
- o Use them according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- o Dispose of them safely.

When it comes to water conservation:

- o Modify your water use by installing water saving appliances or not letting water run when you aren't using it (such as in when brushing your teeth). Get more [water saving tips here](#).
- o Install a water-saving device (such as a low flow toilet or showerhead, faucet aerators or irrigation controllers)

If you own a water well

- o Move possible contamination sources a safe distance from the wellhead
- o Get current on your septic system inspection and cleaning
- o Get your annual water well system inspection
- o Properly decommission any abandoned wells using a professional.

At the household level, the greatest amount of water used inside the home occurs in the bathroom. The remainder of indoor water use is divided between clothes washing and kitchen use, including dish washing, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Agricultural irrigation is far and away the largest user of groundwater in America followed by public use via public water systems or private household wells at a combined total of 18.3 billion gallons per day.

For more information on Protect Your Groundwater Day and water conservation tips visit the [National Groundwater Association website](#).

The DPH Office of Drinking Water works with all public water suppliers in Delaware to ensure compliance with state and federal drinking water regulations. For more information visit [Delaware's Water Quality web page](#).

People that receive their water from a public water supplier and have questions about their water should contact their supplier. Anyone with a question about a private well should contact the Kent County Health Unit, 302-744-1220 for information.

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*